

CENTRAL CORRIDOR BRAINSTORMING ACTIVITY RESPONSES

CTOD FORUM, MARCH 20, 2006

Attendees of the morning and afternoon sessions were asked to complete a short brainstorming activity regarding their preferences and observations of University Avenue and the LRT planning process. 101 surveys were submitted.

Favorite Places

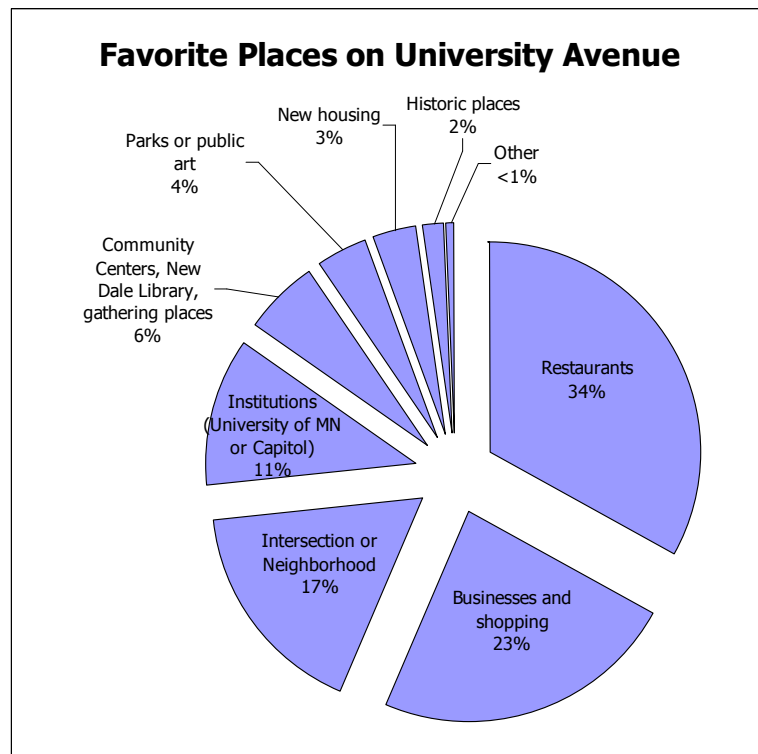
Attendees listed their favorite places on the avenue. The responses were categorized into the groups shown below.

The most common responses were restaurants, bars, and night clubs. While many listed specific establishments, like Andy's Garage, Porky's, or Mai Village, others noted "all the ethnic restaurants" or "the great places to eat." The Turf Club, The Dubliner, and Arnella's Night Club were also frequent answers to this question.

Twenty-three percent of attendees recorded various businesses, offices, and shops as their favorite places. Among these, Midway Shopping Center, the small ethnic businesses, and neighborhood beauty shops

stood out in the surveys. Many people identified an intersection of University Avenue or the name of a neighborhood as their favorite place. Responses ranged from the Arts District at Raymond Avenue and the Fairview intersection to Dinkytown and Prospect Park. Attendees recognized that each section of the avenue has its own purpose, often listing several businesses frequented for each major cross street listed.

Eleven percent listed one of the institutions that bookend the avenue, the State Capitol and the University of Minnesota. Smaller groups noted a selection of community gathering places, parks, and the recent boom of new housing developments. While some attendees recorded the loss of their favorite childhood place, nine responses looked to the future of the street, choosing the library under construction at Dale and University.



Streetscape conditions and visions

When asked to use words or short phrases to describe what the avenue looks like today, attendees described difficult aspects of daily life, from traffic congestion to struggling small businesses. Many noted the great diversity of the avenue, but only a handful of responses used words like ‘vibrant’ or ‘blooming’ to describe University. Rather ‘in transition’ or ‘great potential’ were common ways to express the redevelopment of the corridor. When asked to describe hopes for what the avenue might look like in twenty to twenty-five years, the answers were more pronounced. Protection and enhancement of neighborhood diversity was the overwhelming response, followed closely by the need for street beautification, tree-shaded sidewalks, and more green space. Many called for mixed income housing, a higher density of well-designed buildings, and public spaces for safe walking and biking.

Attendees’ responses when asked to describe how they would like University Avenue to look in twenty to twenty-five years:

“Brawny --- let Grand Avenue be precious, University should be ‘the Street of Big Shoulders’ -- like Chicago in the ‘30s”

“Beautiful, tall buildings, located at the street with big windows”

“The place to be in Minneapolis and St. Paul”

Top 10 descriptions of what University Avenue looks like today

1. Diverse
2. Auto-oriented
3. Great potential/underutilized
4. Dirty
5. Pathway/connector
6. Too wide
7. Unfriendly to pedestrians
8. In transition
9. Ugly
10. Lacking green space/landscaping

Top 10 visions for what University Avenue will look like in 20-25 years

1. Diverse
2. Green
3. Mixed income & mixed use
4. Pedestrian-oriented/walkable
5. Vibrant
6. Beautiful
7. Higher density
8. Accessible
9. A destination
10. Light rail

LRT Planning Process

The activity requested that attendees cite major issues in the planning and construction of the light rail infrastructure. The majority of responses dealt with the integration of the rail into the current transportation system. Improved bus service and connectivity, reduced congestion, pedestrian and bicycle accessibility, and management of cross traffic were frequent topics. Other recommendations were related to community participation, a unified vision for the corridor, construction mitigation, and housing affordability. Below is the complete list of ideas provided by attendees on this subject.

Transportation

- Provide more feeder buses
- Increase frequency of bus service
- Integrate transportation modes
- Keep the 16 busline/maintain block-to-block bus service
- Strengthen bus system
- Connect to regional system
- Make connections between downtowns and neighborhoods
- Focus on pedestrian safety
- Build pedestrian connections, crossings, and accessibility
- Create a pedestrian pathway system
- Provide more time for pedestrians to cross street
- Pay attention to pedestrian/bike needs
- Develop adjacent ROW for bikes
- Assess and manage parking
- Identify park & ride locations/capacity
- Prevent LRT parking in the neighborhoods
- Manage congestion
- Control cross traffic
- Time stop lights to reduce congestion
- Don't put too much effort into maintaining auto capacity
- Reduce vehicle trips, rather than shifting them to 94
- Discourage use of cars
- Provide safety education on riding LRT
- Consider separation of grade at busy intersections
- Develop Union Depot as the hub

Participation/Vision

- Create unified vision for entire line
- Secure funding
- Display a model showing light rail and buses running alongside each other
- Understand and respect the history of the neighborhood
- Keep unique character of University
- Slow the pace from auto-oriented to pedestrian oriented
- Develop a transparent government process
- Communicate clearly with businesses
- Strive for authentic community participation
- Create opportunities for community engagement
- Convert misconceptions
- Keep minority residents informed
- Include minority and low-income residents in decision making process
- Promote fairness
- Show benefits to local residents and businesses
- Give riders a reason to get on and off LRT along University
- Provide opportunities for current residents
- Assess neighborhood impacts
- Build a regional destination
- Create new public space
- Share community identity through station design
- Preserve and enhance cultural diversity

Businesses

- Retain small businesses
- Provide remediation funds for small businesses during construction
- Promote family, local, and independent businesses
- Have joint marketing between adjacent businesses to keep doors open during construction
- Maintain entrepreneurial opportunities for immigrants
- Engage major investors
- Prevent corporate gentrification

Construction

- Be honest regarding length of disruption
- Hire local & minority contractors
- Maintain and increase sidewalk ROW
- Develop a thorough plan to stage and execute construction
- Minimize construction time and impact to businesses
- Create a small business construction period strategy
- Update neighborhood on changes or delays
- Strive for "business as usual"
- Keep buses running during construction to serve transit dependent riders
- Provide alternative parking throughout construction
- Manage vehicular traffic

Affordability

- Plan for affordable housing
- Acquire sites early for affordable housing
- Create housing choices (mixed use, single-family, multi-family, cooperative housing, etc.)
- Prevent displacement of current residents
- Address rising land values/property taxes

Aesthetics/Design

- Incorporate aesthetic improvements
- Plan for beautification
- Enhance character of historic buildings
- Design for people
- Design for safety
- Design for cars now, adapt to transit later
- Link cross streets with landscaping
- Preserve historical feel
- Make physical improvements to buildings
- Plan for public art and public space
- Improve streetscape
- Create quality pedestrian environment

Land Use

- Acquire key parcels for redevelopment
- Begin planning in the center of University and work outwards
- Limit big box retail
- Use a moratorium and land banking
- Redevelop the bus barn site for community development
- Use land use/zoning
- Minimize presence of parking lots
- Promote mixed income/mixed use
- Prevent gentrification
- Promote true urban development
- Promote density

Access

- Make platforms accessible from both sides
- Keep line accessible to neighborhood
- Don't sacrifice access for mobility

Stations

- Plan ½ mile stops
- Keep stations “local”
- Create stations oriented towards neighborhoods, not commuters
- Cluster services at stations
- Add more stops

Corridor and Neighborhood Planning

In addition to the LRT planning, ideas were given on how to approach neighborhood planning, especially along University. Most suggestions deal with the larger strategy and land use policies for long-term redevelopment of the corridor. Transportation issues, from the creation of a bicycle right-of-way, to parking and transit service, are again common responses.

Vision/Strategy

- Conduct long range planning
- Embrace and preserve cultures/diversity
- Require community benefit agreements
- Use community-based policing
- Market the avenue
- Follow district Council structure
- Share funds with stakeholders
- Determine roles of players
- Create gateways
- Have a unified vision
- Support the neighborhood
- Create family and child friendly spaces
- University should serve the entire city
- Preserve surrounding neighborhoods
- Continue funding
- Address racial/class tension
- Change perceptions of crime
- Strengthen the public realm
- Plan for place-making
- Find emotional core of avenue

Community Participation

- Consider current population's contribution
- Develop a citizens' group
- Engage adversaries
- Promote resident involvement
- Provide community education
- Have thoughtful inclusiveness of community
- Convert misconceptions
- City should make the transformation its #1 priority
- Understand/retain history of Rondo
- Build consensus on community vision

Aesthetics/Design

- Create green space
- Add more color in design
- Add public art/space
- Plan for beautification and traffic calming
- Promote high quality development & design
- Landscape the avenue
- Clean up the streetscape
- Design winter-friendly streets
- Create nice places to walk
- Build wide sidewalks

Housing

- Build mixed use housing
- Avoid gentrification
- Use green construction
- Accommodate changing/aging population
- Promote housing quality and affordability
- Use housing density to achieve increased livability and choice
- Have thoughtful construction
- Retain single family homes north of University
- Address displacement
- Require no net loss affordable housing
- Retain/improve housing stock

Land Use

- Create a quality pedestrian environment
- Build entertainment venues, movie theaters, places for teens
- Have mixed-use neighborhood centers
- Balance density
- Limit big box
- Zone for higher housing density
- Require green space in developments
- Encourage street level retail
- Give density incentives
- Use with eminent domain carefully
- Assemble land for redevelopment
- Adhere to TOD standards
- Connect community gathering paces
- Relate buildings to the street
- Be creative with land use
- Phase out industrial uses

Transportation

- Have a good bicycle connection
- Add feeder buses
- Build park & rides
- Integrate transportation modes
- Make the street bike and pedestrian friendly
- Design walkable neighborhoods
- Reduce auto traffic
- Improve sidewalks
- Reduce auto dependency
- Enforce the speed limit
- Build bicycle corridor adjacent to Central Corridor
- Build underground parking ramps

Businesses

- Create good jobs
- Provide small business assistance
- Address impact of rising taxes
- Require mix of chain/local businesses
- Retain opportunities for immigrant entrepreneurs
- Have a neighborhood-business partnership
- Preserve independent businesses
- Raise wages and expand businesses
- Maintain and create small, locally-owned businesses

Communication and Media

The final question asked attendees to brainstorm ideas for how we can best communicate with business owners and residents, in addition to traditional community meetings. The following list was compiled.

- Community bulletin boards/informational kiosks at transit stops and large housing developments (new senior housing, Skyline towers, etc.)
- Educational training/workshops
- Have surveys available at grocery stores and in publicly funded venues (WIC clinics, Head Start, Senior nutrition, visiting nurses)
- Ethnic newspapers

- Post flyers at bus shelters
- Host a “Transit Fair” on the avenue with information booths, food, arts groups, music, etc. The community festival should showcase local talent and cater to families
- Radio updates
- Regularly scheduled check-in sessions with community
- Roundtable discussions about racial and economic equity hosted by community based non profits
- Use new library at Dale and University as a hub for information
- Put an office on the avenue with regular hours
- Training/info sessions for employers
- Neighborhood walking tours
- An LRT monthly newsletter/insert in local papers
- School outreach - projects, field trips, classroom activities
- Rotating display that travels to all city libraries
- Phone trees
- Door-knocking
- Engage major media outlets to do ongoing special reports
- Postcard mailings with calendar
- Dedicated phone number people can call to get information
- Choose block ambassadors
- Email and website
- University Avenue blog
- Forums with design charettes
- Have businesses host block-by-block discussions
- Canvass where people are – bars, bowling alleys, parks, restaurants, laundromats
- Cable television updates/calendar
- Monthly breakfast discussions
- Street theatre/public art
- Reach out to faith-based communities
- Provide translated minutes of meetings
- Flyers
- District councils/CDCs
- Block club meetings
- Field trips
- Show successes in other cities
- Educational opportunities in adjacent neighborhoods
- Transparency between government and residents